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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with research on a comparative education course as assessed by students at the University of Zululand, South Africa. The paper outlines the teacher training program at that university, the place of comparative education within that program, and the curriculum of the comparative education course. At the end of the course 245 students were asked to rate the course as a whole and thereafter each of the following topics on a 5-point Likert scale: education policy; human rights and education; comparative education; the education system of South Africa; the education system of England; and the education system of Kenya. Students were also asked which countries' education systems and/or topics not included in the course they would like to be part of the course. Finally, they were asked to motivate their ratings and their desires of topics that they feel should be included in the course. This paper summarizes and discusses the response to the comparative education course. Contains several tables. A sample questionnaire is appended (Author/BT)

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A COMPARATIVE EDUCATION COURSE: EXPERIENCE AND VIEWS OF STUDENTS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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SO 032 796

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A COMPARATIVE EDUCATION COURSE: EXPERIENCE AND VIEWS OF STUDENTS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

(Dr CC Wolhuter, University of Zululand, South Africa)

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with research on a Comparative Education Course as assessed by students at the University of Zululand, South Africa. The paper outlines the teacher training program at the University of Zululand, the place of Comparative Education within that program and the curriculum of the Comparative Education course. At the end of the course 245 students were asked to rate the course as a whole and thereafter each of the following topics on a five-point Likert scale: Education Policy; Human Rights and Education; Comparative Education; the education system of South Africa; the education system of England; and the education system of Kenya. Students were also asked which countries' education systems and/or topics not included in the course they would like to be part of the course. Finally, they were asked to motivate their ratings and their desires of topics that they feel should be included in the course. This paper summarizes and discusses the response of the Comparative Education students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In moving away from the "Ivory Tower" model, universities worldwide are increasingly under pressure to be accountable and sensitive to their clientele; to be consumer friendly, not only with respect to society, but also with regard to the individual (i.e. the student). The future of the science of Comparative Education depends on the extent to which students find Comparative Education courses meaningful. For these reasons, the current surge in interest in the teaching of Comparative Education, as a evident in the program of this conference, is justifiable.

The purpose of this research project is to determine the way in which students at the University of Zululand, South Africa view and experience their Comparative Education course.

BACKGROUND: THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND, TEACHER TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY, AND THE PLACE OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION IN THAT TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

The University of Zululand was founded in 1959 and is situated on the eastern seaboard of South Africa, some 125 miles north of Durban. Out of a total of 5 000 students, 95% are black. The university consists of the following faculties: Arts, Commerce and Administration, Natural Sciences, Law, Theology and Education. The Faculty of Education, which is mainly involved in teacher training, normally has the largest number of students, although these have declined in recent years due to increasing unemployment of teachers in South Africa.

Teacher training at the University of Zululand consists of a four-year bachelors degree (B.Paed.) combining academic with professional training. The curriculum and course structure are as follows:

Year 1	Year 2
Education 1	Education 1
Two school subjects on first year level	Two school subjects on second year level
Additional subject	

Year 3	Year 4
Subject methods of two school subjects	Education 3
School administration	Two school subjects on third year level
Curriculum studies	
Language competence	
Sports administration and coaching	
Educational technology	
Three weeks teaching practice in schools	

The curricula for Education 1, 2 and 3 mentioned above are:

Education 1	Education 2
History of Education	Educational Psychology
Philosophy of Education	Teaching Science

Education 3

Sociology of Education
Comparative Education

At the time of this research (1999), the Comparative Education module of Education 3 covered the following topics:

- Educational policy: elements of education policy; determinants of education policy; education policy cycle.
- Human Rights and Education: education rights contained in Bill of Rights.
- Comparative Education as a science, approaches and methodology of Comparative Education.
- The education system of South Africa
- The education system of England
- The education system of Kenya

RESEARCH METHOD

Education 3 students were asked to complete course evaluation forms, as attached in appendix 1.

RESULTS

245 students (virtually the entire class) responded.

Average ratings on the Likert-scales were as follows (depicted in appendix 2).

1.	Course as a whole		4.3
2.	a)	Education policy	4.0
	b)	Human rights and education	3.9
	c)	Comparative Education philosophy and methodology	3.8
	d)	The education system of South Africa	3.5
	e)	The education system of England	3.6
	f)	The education system of Kenya	3.3

In answering question 2(g) the following countries were named:

Country	Number of Students	Motivation
USA	50	prosperity of USA
Japan	50	technological superiority; industrial development
China	23	
Singapore	13	technological development
Germany	12	technological development
Cuba	12	
Australia	10	prosperity; outcomes-based education
Nigeria	10	
Swaziland	8	
Mozambique	7	successful adult literacy campaign
Zimbabwe	7	
Ghana	7	
Russia	5	
Canada	4	outcomes-based education
France	4	
Austria	3	
Namibia	3	
Angola	3	
Ethiopia	3	
Tanzania	3	
Zambia	3	
Poland	2	
Saudi Arabia	2	economic self-sufficiency
Congo	2	
Sesotho	1	
Mauritius	1	
Cameroon	1	
Brazil	1	
Egypt	1	
India	1	

Education Systems Students Expresses a Desire to be Included in Course

The following topics were named in answering question 2(g):

Topic	Number of Students
Outcomes-based education	13
How to improve education in South Africa (problem approach. Examples of problems: high failure rate in schools, racism in schools, schooled unemployment)	8
Local (KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa) education system	3
Vocational education	3
Adult education	1
Rural education	1
Educational technology	1
Affirmative Action in education	1
Equal educational opportunities	1
Education of black Americans	1
In-service teacher training	1
Technical education	1
The effect of globalisation on education	1
The relation between education and economy	1

Topics that students wished to include in course

DISCUSSION

The Comparative Education course as a whole as well as each of the topics (the themes Education Policy; Education as a human right; Comparative Education methodology) were rated higher than the area studies. On the basis of the results, a case could be made for the investigation of the possibility of replacing the idiographic area study: South African education system with a problem approach: cross-natural perspectives on some of the problems facing South African education, such as the high failure rate in schools, or sexism in education, and cross-national perspectives on Outcomes-based education (South Africa is at present by instituting outcomes-based education as a major education reform exercise). Furthermore, attention could be given to the possibility of substituting the USA or Japan or Germany for England and China for Kenya as an area study out of the developing world.

APPENDIX 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

EPD 325: Comparative Education: Course Evaluation

Dear Student

You are kindly requested to help the Department of Comparative Education and Science Education with the evaluation of the EPD 325 - Comparative Education course. Knowing your experience and views can help to design more effective courses in the future.

1. On the following five-point scale, how would you rate the course as a whole (Please circle the number of your choice).

absolutely valueless Valueless Neutral Valuable Very valuable

1 2 3 4 5

2. How would you rate each of the following topics covered in the course, on the same scale as used in question (1):

a) Education policy

1 2 3 4 5

b) Human Rights and Education

1 2 3 4 5

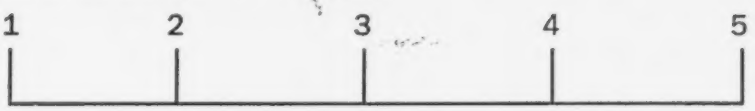
c) Comparative Education as a Science, Approaches and Methodology of Comparative Education

1 2 3 4 5

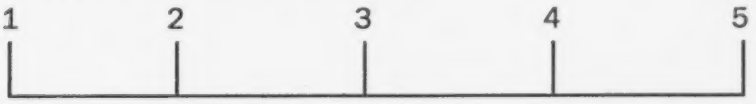
d) The education system of South Africa

1 2 3 4 5

e) The education system of England



f) The education system of Kenya



g) Please name any topics and/or countries you would like to be included in the course

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3. Motivate your answers to questions 1 and 2 (optional)

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4. Please supply your student number and name (optional) _____

Thank you for your cooperation

APPENDIX 2: AVERAGE RATINGS FOR QUESTIONS BY STUDENTS

EPD 325: Comparative Education: Course Evaluation

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You are kindly requested to help the Department of Comparative Education and Science Education with the evaluation of the EPD 325 - Comparative Education course. Knowing your experience and views can help to design more effective courses in the future.

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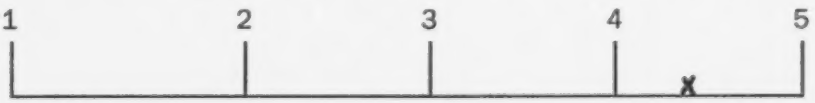
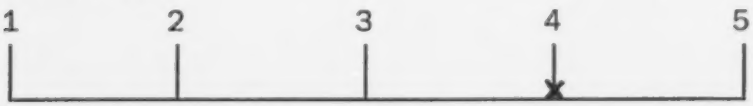
absolutely valueless Valueless Neutral Valuable Very valuable

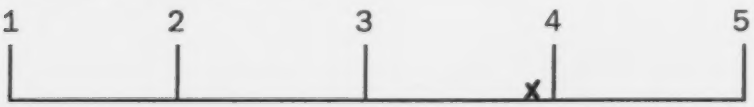


2. How would you rate each of the following topics covered in the course, on the same scale as used in question (1):

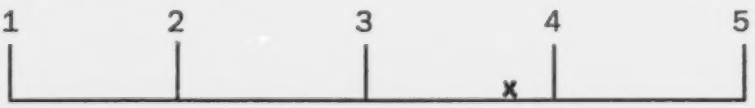
a) Education policy



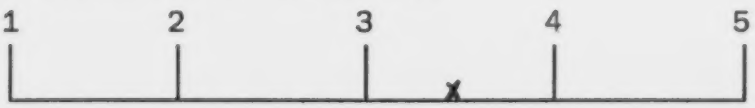
b) Human Rights and Education



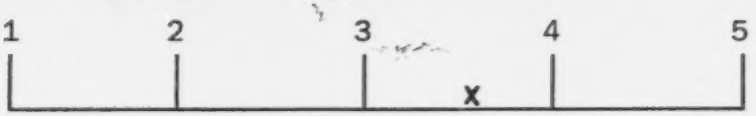
c) Comparative Education as a Science, Approaches and Methodology of Comparative Education



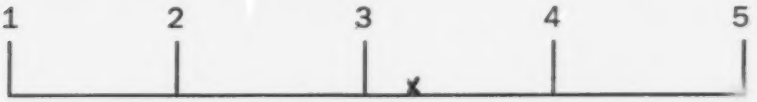
d) The education system of South Africa



e) The education system of England



f) The education system of Kenya



g) Please name any topics and/or countries you would like to be included in the course

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3. Motivate your answers to questions 1 and 2 (optional)

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4. Please supply your student number and name (optional) _____ .

Thank you for your cooperation